

Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-08 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-04 OPR-01 A-01 /063 W

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P 071140Z NOV 74

FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3042

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 0951

JOHANNESBURG FOR CONGEN KILLORAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT POLI AO

SUBJ: POLITICS AND THE SECURITY SITUATION ON THE EVE OF MPLA'S

GRAND ENTRANCE INTO LUANDA

1. A GOVERNMENT SOURCE HAS CONFIRMED PRESS REPORTS THAT THE MPLA DELEGATION WILL ARRIVE IN LUANDA BY AIR 1000 NOV 8. STORIES ARE CIRCULATING THAT MPLA IS CALLING FOR A GENERAL STRIKE THAT DAY TO SWELL THE WELCOMING CROWDS ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HERE SAYS IT IS UNAWARE OF SUCH A PLAN. THE MPLA DELEGATION IS SCHEDULED TO LEAVE ON NOV 11.

2. ON NOV 5 THE NEWLY OPENED FNLA OFFICE ISSUED A LENGTHY STATEMENT CONFIRMING THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THEIR ROLE AS A PEACEFUL POLITICAL PARTY, URGING UNITY AND SNIPING AT MPLA (READ NETO) FOR BEING PURVEYORS OF IDEOLOGIES AND IDEAS "ALIEN TO THE ANGOLAN REALITY" (READ MARXISM). FNLA DESCRIBED ITSELF AS AN INNOVATING, PRACTICAL PARTY-OF-THE-PEOPLE SEEKING ANGOLAN SOLUTIONS TO ANGOLAN PROBLEMS. (THIS IS MUCH THE SAME TACK TAKEN BY SAVIMBI

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IN A SERIES OF SPEECHES TO UNITA'S RECENT PARTY CONGRESS HELD IN

THE BUSH NEAR LUSO.) THE FNLA STATEMENT ALSO ATTEMPTED TO RE-ASSURE WHITES, SAYING THEY COULD KEEP ANY PROPERTY OWNED PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE PROVIDED IT HAD BEEN "JUSTLY ACQUIRED."

3. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE LOCAL SPECULATION THAT FNLA AND UNITA ARE CAREFULLY MOVING TOWARD AN ANTI-MPLA ALLIANCE AND THAT CHIPENDA WILL SOON FORMALLY JOIN FNLA. PART OF THE INCENTIVE FOR AN FNLA-UNITA COALITION IS THE EMBARRASSINGLY SMALL ATTENDANCE (LESS THAN ONE THOUSAND) AT A MARCH AND RALLY HELD A FEW DAYS AGO TO INAUGURATE FNLA'S LUANDA HEADQUARTERS. FNLA REPRESENTATIVES HAVE BEEN PRIVATELY QUOTED EXPRESSING FEAR OF AN MPLA SACK OF THEIR OFFICE. IN A STRANGE DEVELOPMENT UNITA IS REPORTED TO HAVE WITHDRAWN THEIR UNOFFICIAL REPRESENTATION FROM LUANDA AT THE SAME TIME FORMAL ESTABLISHMENT OF THEIR OFFICE WAS ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY. IF TRUE, THE ACTION WAS PROBABLY PROMPTED BY SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS.

4. ON NOV 6 VOA CORRESPONDENT DOUG ROBERTS, AN ARGUS CORRESPONDENT AND A POLISH RADIO NEWSMAN WERE TREATED TO A SCARE INTERVIEW BY A MIDDLE-LEVEL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WHO SAID BOTH FNLA AND MPLA HAVE INFILTRATED CONSIDERABLE ARMS AND MEN INTO LUANDA AND THAT A VIOLENT SHOWDOWN WAS POSSIBLE AS EARLY AS NOV 9 - 10. HE EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT THE PORTUGUESE ARMY'S WILL TO RETAIN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION AND SAID THE FOREMOST INTEREST OF THE YOUNG OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN IS TO "BE IN LISBON BY CHRISTMAS." INDIRECT SAMPLING OF OPINION IN THE MILITARY INDICATES THERE ARE TWO GROUPS, THOSE WHO SIMPLY WANT OUT AND THOSE WHO WANT TO LEAVE UNLESS THEIR LEADERS BEGIN ACTING MORE VIGOROUSLY TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER.

5. A MOUNTING WAVE OF STRIKES AND ADDITIONAL, NON-LABOR PROBLEMS IN THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (E.G. ILLIQUIDITY, PORT PROBLEMS) ARE BEHIND INCREASING FOOD SHORTAGES, PARTICULARLY MILK, BEER, MEAT, SUGAR AND FRUIT.

6. DURING THE NIGHTS OF NOV 5-6 AND 6-7 THERE WERE SERIOUS INCIDENTS IN AND ON THE EDGES OF LUANDA'S SLUM DISTRICTS WITH SOME DEATHS REPORTED. THE EVENING OF NOV 5-6 THE ARMY FIRED INTO ONE AREA FOR SEVERAL MINUTES AND REPORTEDLY TOOK ANSWERING FIRE FROM AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. THAT CONFRONTATION GREW OUT OF A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT EARLIER IN THE EVENING. THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON (NOV 6) A WHITE WAS
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HACKED TO DEATH WITH A CANE KNIFE AND IT TOOK THE ARMY SEVERAL HOURS TO RECOVER THE BODY AND ALL NIGHT TO RESTORE ORDER. NOV 6 THE ARMY MADE RADIO ANNOUNCEMENTS CALLING OFF-DUTY AND ON-LEAVE PERSONNEL BACK TO DUTY.

7. PROPAGANDA OF PURPORTEDLY MPLA ORIGIN HAS BEGUN ATTACKING "AMERICAN IMPERIALISM." LIKEWISE LEADERS OF TWO SMALL PREDOMINANTLY WHITE GROUPS LINKED TO MPLA (FRESDA AND MDA) HAVE PUBLICLY MADE

ANTI-U.S. STATEMENTS. THE HEAD OF MPLA'S LUANDA OFFICE, HERMANIO ESCORCIO, REFUSES TO MEET DIRECTLY WITH THE VOA CORRESPONDENT, ALTHOUGH HE SAID HE MIGHT TALK WITH HIM IF A WHITE ANGOLAN REPORTER ACTED AS INTERLOCUTER. SEVERAL TALK SHOWS ON THE GOVERNMENT RADIO STATION HAVE BEEN TAKEN OVER BY MPLA ADHERENTS WHO HAVE BROADCAST A HEAVY LINE OF "ANTI-IMPERIALIST" AND ANTI-U.S. PRO-PAGANDA. UNTIL QUITE RECENTLY ATTACKS ON THE US WERE ALMOST UNKNOWN HERE BUT WILL PROBABLY INCREASE IN FREQUENCY AND VIRULENCE AS MPLA GEARS UP ITS LUANDA EFFORT.

8. COMMENT: DESPITE THE POTENTIAL FOR SERIOUS VIOLENCE BETWEEN THE POLITICAL GROUPS WHEN MPLA ARRIVES HERE NOV 8, THE POST NONE-THELESS JUDGES THE PROBABILITY LOW. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT MPLA FEELS THE TIME RIPE FOR A SHOWDOWN AND NEITHER FNLA NOR UNITA IS STRONG ENOUGH IN LUANDA TO ATTEMPT A VIOLENT REACTION. FINALLY, THE RECENT CRACKDOWN ON WHITE GROUPS REDUCES -ALTHOUGH BY NO MEANS COMPLETELY- THE CHANCE THEY MIGHT ATTEMPT TO PROVOKE INCIDENTS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SECURITY, LIBERATION FRONTS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LUANDA00951
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740320-0461
From: LUANDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741163/aaaacboj.tel
Line Count: 134
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 JUN 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <31 MAR 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICS AND THE SECURITY SITUATION ON THE EVE OF MPLA'S GRAND ENTRANCE INTO LUANDA
TAGS: PINT, PINS, AO, MPLA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005